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ABSTRACT

Coping with aggressive student behavior is crucial to providing a safe and orderly classroom and school environment. Approaches for improving student behavior, ranging from enhancing a student's interpersonal skills to restraint techniques (such as the prudent use of physical force) are covered in this booklet. The material blends information in the literature, which covers aggressive student behavior, with the experiences of teachers and administrators. Practical solutions are emphasized. The information is presented in a story format in which two young teachers set out on a journey to learn more about successfully coping with a student whose behavior is out of control. The teachers' journey takes them on a visit to an exemplary middle school, where they learn about keeping the student's behavior in bounds, improving interpersonal skills, developing social decision-making skills, and using restraint techniques, some of which are illustrated. Ways in which teachers can explore their own hot-button issues are also offered, as is a scenario in which a teacher uses "verbal judo" to defuse a tense situation with a student. The text closes with a 10-point checklist for reviewing the different ideas covered in these two fictional teachers' day. (RJM)

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Controlling Aggressive Students

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This fastback is dedicated in memory of Herbert H. Handley (1934-1992), Distinguished Professor of Education Emeritus and Phi Delta Kappan, whose outstanding teaching and creative scholarship in bridging research and practice continues to inspire both faculty and students in the College of Education at Mississippi State University.

The illustrations of restraint techniques used in this fastback were produced by Suzanne Tribble of Mississippi State University and are used by permission.

Series Editor, Donovan R. Walling

Controlling Aggressive Students

by
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and
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Introduction

Coping with aggressive student behavior is crucial to providing a safe and orderly classroom and school environment. Today's public schools serve more than five million of the nation's students with disabilities. Many of these students exhibit behavior problems, some of which include physical and verbal aggression.

In this fastback, we present an approach to restraining aggressive behavior that ranges from improving a student's interpersonal skills to restraint techniques, such as the prudent use of physical force. The content presented blends the best information in the literature on the topic of aggressive student behavior with our own experience as teachers and administrators. The ideas are practical and have been proven to work in actual situations.

However, caution should be exercised in using physical restraint techniques.

Written in story format, this fastback involves Phil and Janice, the two young teachers who were first introduced in fastback 353 *Win-Win Discipline*. In this new fastback, Phil and Janice set out on a journey to learn more about successfully coping with the student whose behavior is out of control. Their journey takes them on a visit to an exemplary middle school, where they learn about keeping the student's behavior in bounds, improving interpersonal skills, developing social decision-making skills, and using restraint techniques. We hope you will find the ideas presented in this fastback helpful.

Accepting the Mission

Graduates of State University and professional colleagues, Phil teaches high school social studies and Janice teaches fourth grade. Both became teachers in the district at the same time. As first-year teachers, they were recognized as "rookies of the year" for their excellent teaching and classroom discipline. Phil and Janice attributed their teaching success to the university's outstanding preparation program in professional education.

Arriving a little early at the superintendent's office, Phil picked up the latest issue of the *Kappan* to read as he waited for Janice and their appointment with the superintendent. Moments later, Janice arrived.

"Hi, Phil," said Janice.

"Good to see you," replied Phil. "How is everything at school?"

"Pretty good," said Janice. "I have a great bunch of students. They are all so eager to learn. But I have some concerns this year that are different than before."

"What do you mean?" queried Phil.

Before she could elaborate, the superintendent's secretary said, "Pardon me, but Dr. Jones would like to see you now."

As they entered her office, Dr. Jones rose from her desk and greeted them. "It's good to see the two of you again," she said. "Would you like something to drink?"

"Ice tea, please," said Janice. "It's a very warm day."

"Likewise," echoed Phil.

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After Phil and Janice were seated and served their tea, Dr. Jones said, "I can't thank you enough for discovering the win-win discipline system. Thanks to you two, classroom and school discipline in our district is among the best in the state. The staff development workshops you presented for the district's teachers and administrators were excellent."

Phil and Janice smiled as they reflected on their successful odyssey to discover ways to establish and maintain good student discipline.

Dr. Jones continued, "Because we are a small district committed to site-based leadership with a lean central office staff, I need your help in what appears to be a growing concern among our teachers and administrators. Because the development of the new industrial and technological park in our community is bringing in many new people, we are experiencing a larger number of new students with special needs than in the past. Many of these special needs students have behavior problems, and some are very physically and verbally aggressive. Add the special education concept of inclusion to the situation, and serious problems may occur if we don't take preventive measures. The district's administrators, teachers, and staff need to be prepared to cope with any situation."

"I know what you mean," said Janice. "Just before our meeting, I started to tell Phil about the new student in my classroom who aggressively lashes out at others when he becomes upset."

"For tomorrow's principals' meeting, all of our principals requested that 'coping with students' aggressive behavior' be put at the top of the agenda," said Dr. Jones.

"What is it that you want us to do?" asked Phil.

"With the help of our state's education department, I have identified a middle school within an hour's drive whose program for coping with aggressive student behavior is considered excellent," answered Dr. Jones. "I would appreciate the two of you investigating and reporting on their program. Of course, I could do it myself; but a teacher's perspective would be better."

"What about our classes?" asked Janice.

"You both have student teachers who are honor students at the university and know the daily routines. They can take over your classes with the help of the assistant superintendent and myself," answered Dr. Jones. "It's good for administrators not to let their teaching skills get too rusty."

Leaving Dr. Jones' office, Phil and Janice considered themselves fortunate to be guided by a superintendent who was both an instructional leader and a competent manager.

A few days later, Janice received a telephone call from Dr. Jones' secretary telling her that everything had been arranged for their visit to the middle school with the exemplary program for helping teachers cope with aggressive student behavior. The visit was set for Friday of the following week. Janice thanked the secretary and told her that she would inform Phil.

Keeping Behavior in Bounds

After a pleasant drive on a cheery spring morning, Phil and Janice arrived at the middle school Dr. Jones had selected for their visit. Walking from the visitor's parking lot to the school building, they were impressed with the well-maintained campus. It was obvious that both students and staff cared about their school environment.

As Phil and Janice entered the school office, they were greeted cordially by the school secretary. "Dr. Marley, our principal, is expecting you," said the secretary. Dr. Marley met the visitors at the door of her office. "It's a pleasure to meet you," she said.

After seeing that Phil and Janice were comfortably seated and served coffee, Dr. Marley said, "When Dr. Jones called me to schedule your visit, she said the two of you are on a special assignment to learn more about coping with aggressive student behavior."

"Yes," replied Janice. "We want to learn all we can about the subject because it is beginning to become a problem in our schools."

"Coping with aggressive student behavior starts with *keeping behavior in bounds*," continued Dr. Marley. "Most student misbehavior occurs during the less structured instructional times. Name calling, pushing, shoving, and so forth can become epidemic unless the teacher provides a structured classroom environment, clarifies behavioral expectations, and imposes limits."

"But doesn't a structured environment impede the teacher's efforts to help students develop independent thinking and express their own ideas?" asked Janice.

"It's a balancing act," answered Dr. Marley. "To keep student behavior in bounds while using a variety of teaching strategies and developing independent thinking, the teacher should establish a behavior management system. Providing feedback to students about their conduct helps them internalize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

"Planning ahead is a prerequisite to successful classroom management. The first step in keeping student behavior in bounds by using preventive procedures calls for the teacher to include students as active participants in developing a list of rules that addresses behavioral expectations for the classroom. Rules should be general enough that a few rules can cover many situations."

"Let me see if I understand what you're telling us," said Phil. "Instead of listing several individual rules, such as 'Raise your hand before speaking' or 'Don't interrupt another student,' stating the rule as 'Work quietly so that you won't disturb your neighbor' is preferable."

"That's right, Phil," replied Dr. Marley. "Classroom rules fall into two categories. The first category covers general rules, such as the one you mentioned about not disturbing your neighbor. The second category covers specific situations. Situational rules address specific activities, such as working in a group, attending special assemblies, or taking a field trip. The rule, 'Students should take turns with materials during group work,' is an example of a situational rule. Once established, classroom rules must be followed.

"The second key step in behavior management is *consistency*. Reinforcers for appropriate behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior are important facets of the consistency principle. Wishy-washy teachers who don't deliver consequences for inappropriate behavior, or who fail to reinforce students for following the rules, experience difficulty in building responsible student behavior. Let's observe Ms. Lankin's sixth-grade language arts class so that you can see for yourselves what I've been talking about."

On the way to Ms. Lankin's room, Dr. Marley told Phil and Janice that the middle school had been built in the early 1960s, with the as-

sistance of a generous grant from a private foundation, for the purpose of serving as a field-based laboratory school. As originally conceived, the laboratory school was to be the focal point of a partnership between the school district and a private college in the community, which had since phased out its teacher education program. Although the well-maintained physical plant had not been operated as a college laboratory school for two decades, the current staff appreciated the spacious classrooms, the adjoining teacher offices, and the observation rooms with one-way windows. The trio entered the observation room adjacent to Ms. Lankin's classroom, seated themselves, and scanned the situation.

A colorful bulletin board located on the classroom's north wall displayed the students' names and immediately caught the attention of Phil and Janice. Sailboats were tacked beside each name. Some students had five sailboats, while others had fewer. Dr. Marley explained that the bulletin board was part of a behavior management system designed to help students practice appropriate behavior.

Noticing their interest, Dr. Marley said, "If a student breaks a rule, Ms. Lankin doesn't give the student much attention, choosing to remove one of the sailboats instead. When all the boats beside a student's name are pulled, a consequence is given. In Ms. Lankin's class a student receives five minutes of detention for each sailboat taken off the board. Other teachers use alternative means for tracking misbehavior, such as marking a checklist when a rule infraction occurs. Teachers who work with older students — seventh- and eighth-grade students, for example — use a checklist of student names to keep track of rule infractions. At the end of the day or week, whatever time span the teacher chooses, contingencies are delivered to all students."

"Contingencies?" Phil asked. "What do you mean?"

"Contingencies are actually rewards or punishments," answered Dr. Marley. "Contingencies differ markedly between elementary and secondary students. Teachers should involve the students in determining the contingencies — both reinforcers and consequences — when the

rules are established. Students know best those contingencies that are most reinforcing to them, as well as those that are most likely to deter inappropriate behavior. Examples of reinforcers are extra time for recess, happy-face stickers, a class party, or some other treat. Consequences include withholding free time, loss of recess time, demerits, or some other punishment."

"We use a similar approach in the win-win discipline system, but we don't refer to rewards as reinforcers or use the term *contingencies* in this manner," said Janice. "I guess these are special education terms."

"They are, but they also apply to the classroom in general," replied Dr. Marley. "The third step to sound behavior management is for the teacher to structure the environment in an orderly, predictable manner. A properly structured environment requires establishing a daily routine, as well as a number of physical space considerations. Make sure that students understand the daily classroom schedule by taking them through the routine many times. The security of a daily routine can be preventive in warding off undesirable behavior. Start the day with an activity that provides students with transition time. This allows students the opportunity to get ready for work. Provide various types of activities, and alternate mental activities with physical activities throughout the day."

Directing the attention of Phil and Janice toward Ms. Lankin's classroom, Dr. Marley said, "As you can see, Ms. Lankin avoids scheduling quiet and active activities simultaneously. She also considers the proximity of students when planning activities to ensure adequate space for movement. Adequate space should be provided between groups when there are several working groups in one classroom."

"What about providing isolation for students who need it?" asked Phil.

Pointing out Ms. Lankin's isolation areas — two partially enclosed study carrels against the classroom's rear wall — Dr. Marley answered, "Some students require physical isolation to study or work independently. Ms. Lankin's isolation areas are not intended for punishment

but as quiet retreats to be used as needed. Students who have difficulty working in near proximity to others should have their own space. The space may be a table, desk, or carrel. It should be organized for easy access to materials and arranged so the student can see what is going on and participate in class activities."

All of a sudden the door of the observation room opened and a young man in his late twenties entered.

"Hi. I'm Bob Majeski. Ray's my brother. When Ray heard you would be visiting my school, he said to say hello and that he hoped what you learned about student discipline from visiting his school was helpful."

"It certainly was," said Phil and Janice together, smiling as they reflected on how very successful the win-win discipline system was proving to be in their school district.

"That's why we're here," said Phil. "What we learned about student discipline from your brother was great, but we need to delve deeper into coping with aggressive behavior."

"Bob teaches in the math-science curriculum block on the seventh-grade team," said Dr. Marley. "He also received a teaching excellence award for his success in helping students resolve their behavior problems."

"What is your secret?" Janice asked.

Gesturing toward Joan Lankin's classroom, Majeski said, "I use essentially the same approach that Joan uses, but my contingencies are different. One method that I use with a student having trouble controlling his aggressive behavior requires the student to keep a notebook titled, "Getting It Together." The notebook contains forms divided into five columns for the days of the school week. The numbers 1 to 21 in bold print run from the top of each column to the bottom. Each number equals one minute. Every time the student chooses to behave aggressively, such as harassing or bullying another student, I cross out one of the numbers, starting with 21 and working up the column to 1. As I cross out the number, I briefly tell the student why. At noon on Friday,

all the numbers not crossed out are added and the student can choose to do a wide range of predetermined activities, such as reading for pleasure or playing a video game for the amount of minutes accumulated. For example, if 12 numbers are left for Monday, all 21 for Tuesday, 11 for Wednesday, 14 for Thursday, and 8 for Friday, the student would have earned 66 minutes to do activities of his choice. If no numbers have been crossed out, the student earns 105 activity minutes, nearly two hours. By the way, I just happen to have copies of the form for you."

Phil and Janice graciously accepted their "Getting It Together" forms from Bob and liked what they saw.

"If the student's aggressive behavior persists, I use an individual contingency contract," continued Majeski. "A contingency contract is a written agreement that outlines specific behaviors the student is expected to exhibit and the contingencies — the rewards or punishments — that will follow. For a contract to work, contingencies, as well as desired behaviors, must be completely defined. Tomorrow I'm giving an inservice presentation on developing contingency contracts for teachers in a neighboring school district. Would you like a copy of a handout I have prepared?"

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Janice.

Majeski laughed as he gave copies of the handout to Phil, Janice, and Dr. Marley. The handout was titled, *Guidelines for Developing Contingency Contracts*, and provided seven tips for teachers:

1. Work on one target behavior at a time or a few closely related behaviors.
2. Determine meaningful rewards by taking time to discuss the issue with the student.
3. Accentuate the positive in writing the contract, and use specific language that is easily understood by the student.
4. State what the consequences are, who is responsible for providing them, and when they will be administered.

5. Determine with the student the beginning and ending dates for the contract, and make sure the dates are written in the contract.
6. Reinforce appropriate behavior by rewarding the student for all progress made in fulfilling the contract.
7. Renegotiate the contract if it does not work as anticipated.

After Phil and Janice finished reading the handout, Majeski said, "Contracts should be viewed as binding between the teacher and the student. I brought copies of two actual contracts, with the students' name deleted, for you to see. One is used by a primary teacher in my school and the other was developed by my other brother, who teaches high school English."

Phil and Janice perused the contracts and expressed their appreciation to Bob Majeski.

Elementary Level Contract

I, _____, hereby declare that I will *not shove other students when we are in line for lunch or recess.*

This job will be considered complete by *Mrs. Johns when she observes my behavior each time we line up for lunch and recess.*

For being successful, I will *receive an extra punch on my good behavior punch card*

If I am not successful, I will *lose five minutes of afternoon recess for each time I push or shove.*

Date signed: *September 26, 1995*
Teacher's signature: *Mrs. Johns*
Student's signature: _____

High School Level Contract

This is an agreement between _____ and *Mrs. Haskins*.

The contract begins on *September 26, 1995*, and ends on *September 30, 1995*. It will be reviewed on *September 30, 1995*.

The terms of the agreement are:

Student will *not destroy or in any way mishandle school property*.

Teacher *will monitor student's handling of school property throughout the day by checking with Susan's classroom teachers at 3:30. If Susan has not mishandled school property, she will receive 10 bonus coupons*.

When the student completes his/her part of the contract, the teacher will give the student the agreed-on reward. If the student does not fulfill his/her part of the contract, the reward will be withheld.

Student's signature: _____
Teacher's signature: *Mrs. Haskins*
Date: *September 25, 1995*

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Improving Interpersonal Skills

After Bob Majeski left, Dr. Marley said, "While an effective teacher will use external controls, such as behavior management, to address aggressive behavior, she also will teach students to develop internal controls, such as keeping calm through the use of self-talk. As a student learns to take control of his physical actions, he also must learn to assert himself while exercising appropriate controls. Effective behavior depends on the student's ability to differentiate between passiveness, aggressiveness, and assertiveness.

"My many years experience as a classroom teacher and principal have led me to conclude that both children and adolescents use three basic types of behavior in responding to others: passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors. It is important that a student fully understand the differences among the three types. When a student with behavior problems is sent to see me as principal, I ask the student to help me define the three terms. As a matter of fact, I am scheduled to see Billy about his behavior in a few minutes. Would you like to sit in on the session?"

"Yes," answered Phil and Janice in unison.

Soon Phil and Janice were sitting on comfortable chairs in Dr. Marley's spacious office awaiting the arrival of Billy, a seventh-grade student who recently transferred to the school. When Billy arrived, Dr. Marley introduced Phil and Janice to him and asked if he would mind having the two visiting teachers present while discussing the reason he was sent to see the principal. Billy responded that he didn't mind.

Dr. Marley began the session by asking Billy to explain why he thought his teacher wanted him to discuss his behavior with the principal.

"When I get mad at another kid, I smack him, shove him, or cuss him. You know, get in his face. I let him know he shouldn't mess with me," said Billy.

Dr. Marley stood and walked to a marker-board mounted on the wall of her office. Picking up a dry marker, she asked Billy to help her define three types of behavior — passive, aggressive, and assertive. Before writing the definition, Dr. Marley and Billy discussed his response until they came to agreement. The three terms and their definitions were written on the board as follows:

Passive Behavior: Unsure of what you want to do. Going along with the crowd. No eye contact. Using a weak, whiny voice.

Aggressive Behavior: Wanting to strike out. Getting physical. Staring at the person you are talking to. Scowling at him. Using a loud, angry voice. Creating a mean tone.

Assertive Behavior: Stating positively and firmly the point you want to make. Being sure of your feelings. Looking at the person you are talking to.

Giving Billy time to study their joint definitions, Dr. Marley returned to her desk and asked, "How does all this relate to communicating with others?"

"I guess a person needs to be able to tell the difference among being passive, aggressive, and assertive in dealing with others," answered Billy. "I need to talk with somebody in a way that increases my chance of being understood and respected."

"Yes," replied the principal. "*How* you communicate to others is as important as *what* you communicate. The goal is for a student to be able to say what he wants to say in a way that is considerate of the feelings and rights of others. It's much better to be assertive than passive or aggressive. Being assertive means being honest about your feelings, displaying confidence through good posture, making good eye contact, and using a calm voice."

Next Dr. Marley asked Billy to tell her how he would handle each of the following incidents, using assertive rather than passive or aggressive behavior:

1. A friend borrowed five dollars from you and has not paid you back. It has been two weeks, and he had told you he would return the money within a few days.
2. Your sister borrowed your best sweater and returned it with a huge hole in it.
3. Your best friend told you he couldn't go swimming with you because he had to clean his room. Later, at the pool, you see him with another friend.

"What would you do in each of these incidents?"

Billy thought about the three incidents for a few moments. "Boy, if any of my friends or my sister treated me that way, I'd really be mad," he asserted.

"I'm sure you would," replied Dr. Marley. "But think how you could handle the situation so that your feelings would be known without making the problem worse."

"I wouldn't care if the problem was worse. I'd just want to show them that they couldn't treat me that way," replied Billy angrily.

"That's a good point, Billy," stated Dr. Marley. "You might not care now if you make things worse, but there is a good chance you'll regret it later. It's okay to acknowledge that you're feeling angry. Everyone gets angry. The point is to deal with your feelings in a way that helps the situation. You always have alternatives, Billy."

Billy thought about the three incidents and then said, "I guess I could tell each of them how it makes me feel that they did those things to me. I might even tell them that I don't want to be their friend any more!"

"That's okay, too, if that's how you feel," replied Dr. Marley. "The point is to think through your alternatives and choose a plan of action that you feel will get you the best response. You might choose instead to say something like, 'Bob, you told me you'd pay me back the five

dollars you borrowed within a few days, and it has been two weeks. It really upsets me because I need my money. I'm going to be unable to loan you money again if you don't return it by Friday'."

"I guess that sounds okay," said Billy. "Then if I do decide to be friends with them after the anger blows over, I haven't backed myself into a corner."

"Exactly," replied Dr. Marley. "You're getting the hang of it. Here is another problem:

"Walking home from school one day you see smoke coming from behind a bush. When you look behind the bush, you see two of your friends smoking cigarettes. They offer you a smoke. What will you do?

"Take a few moments and think it through."

Billy paused for a few moments and then responded that he would solve the smoking problem by telling the other two boys that he didn't smoke because he planned to run track in the spring and smoking made running more difficult. The principal agreed that was a good way for Billy to assert his feelings and handle the situation in a positive manner.

Dr. Marley told Billy that she enjoyed discussing behavior with him and hoped he would reflect on what they talked about. The principal ended the session by emphasizing that she expected his behavior to improve and would be monitoring it on a regular basis. She made it clear that Billy was expected to meet the school's standards for appropriate behavior.

After Billy had returned to his classroom, Phil and Janice told Dr. Marley that they appreciated observing the session and learned much to take back to their own district.

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Developing Social Decision-Making Skills

Shortly after the session with Billy, Dr. Marley's secretary announced that Mary Stark had arrived. The principal told Phil and Janice that Mary taught eighth-grade English and came to the middle school three years ago for the challenge of working with preteens after teaching third grade for 10 years.

After introducing Mary to Phil and Janice, Dr. Marley said, "I wanted the two of you to meet Mary because she is an expert on developing social decision-making skills in children and teens. Her staff development workshops on the subject are earning her a national reputation."

Mary blushed and said, "Dr. Marley is overly generous, but I appreciate the opportunity to share my ideas with you. Developing a student's social decision-making skills is another way to prevent problem behavior. A student should be taught to consider the consequences of his action before he acts. Through considering the pros and cons of his behavior, the student will become more reflective of his action before acting impulsively. The process of making good decisions helps a student develop self-confidence in his ability to handle various types of situations."

Glancing at each other, Phil and Janice related what Mary was saying to the session between Dr. Marley and Billy that they had just observed. Mary continued, "Teaching decision making is not something that should be taught only when a student's behavior is out of control, but should be viewed as a proactive way to teach for the development

of appropriate social skills. Some teachers believe that their job is to concentrate solely on academics and not pay much attention to such areas as social and emotional development. Not only does teaching students to make good social decisions help to keep potentially explosive behavior in bounds, it can facilitate the development of assertive behavior in students who are reserved or withdrawn.

"Building social decision-making skills helps students internalize their locus of control. In other words, it helps the student understand that he is in control of his destiny. I recommend that the student be taught five specific steps." Mary enumerated them as follows:

1. *Identify the problem.* The problem is the actual dilemma or challenge facing the student.
2. *List the solutions.* List as many ideas or answers as possible without being critical or evaluative. Brainstorming or freewheeling should be encouraged. Killer phrases, such as "That's ridiculous" or "You've got to be kidding," should not be allowed.
3. *Consider alternative solutions.* List what is good and bad about each solution. Take the perspective of the other person. Try to imagine how the solution looks to him.
4. *Make a decision.* Choose one of the solutions and implement it through a plan of action. Make good things happen.
5. *Evaluate the results.* After implementing the plan of action, evaluate the outcomes of the decision that was made.

"It is has been my experience," said Mary, "that a student at any level, elementary or secondary, who practices this process develops effective social decision-making skills."

"Did you bring some examples of activities that you use with students to develop social decision-making skills?" asked Dr. Marley.

"Yes," answered Mary as she handed Phil and Janice a packet of 4 x 6 activity cards to peruse. The first card presented a case study pertaining to a smoking incident. The following information was written on the card:

Social Decision-Making Skills: Case Study 1

Teaching note: This activity may be used with an individual student or a group of students. The major purpose of this activity is to encourage critical thinking.

1. Provide the student (or students) with the following situation:

> Jane's mom usually picked her up from school, but today she had to walk home. On the way, she saw some of her friends ahead of her and ran to catch up. As she got closer, they suddenly disappeared behind some bushes. Jane called out to them, but they did not hear her. When Jane got to the bushes, she heard whispers and giggles and saw smoke drifting over the bush. Jane peeped over just as her friend Karen was lighting a cigarette. Karen saw her and asked Jane if she wanted a smoke. Jane doesn't want to smoke, but she also doesn't want to be considered a wimp by her friend. How will Jane solve her problem?

2. Ask the student (or students) to identify Jane's problem. Take the time necessary for the student to succinctly identify the problem.

3. Encourage the student to explore solutions to the problem and choose the one she thinks is best. Ask the student to tell you why she thinks it is the best solution.

The next nine cards contained other examples of case studies, such as:

> You are lining up to go to lunch and another student gives you a hard push. The teacher is at the front of the line and doesn't see what is going on. What would you do?

However, the 11th card provided a method for encouraging students to generate their own case study. This card contained the following information:

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Social Decision-Making Skills: Reflective Thinking

Teaching note: This activity may be used with an individual student or a group of students. The major purpose of this activity is to encourage both reflective and critical thinking.

1. Ask the student to think of a situation in which he had to make a decision.

2. After the student has identified the situation, ask him to describe it to you.

3. Encourage the student to reflect on the decision he made. Have him evaluate the consequences. Ask such questions as: Where you satisfied with the outcome? Why or why not? What were other decisions you could have made? If you could do it over, would you make another decision? What would the new decision be?

The 12th card presented a group activity titled, "The Bug Jar."

Social Decision-Making Skills: "The Bug Jar"

Teaching note: This activity is designed to use with a group of students. The major purpose of this activity is to encourage critical and creative thinking in dealing with annoying behavior. To do this activity, the teacher will need the following materials: jar, index cards, and pencils.

1. Place the jar, labeled *Bug Jar*, on a table. Explain and discuss annoying behavior — what it means to be *bugged* — with a group of students. Ask students to write examples of what bothers or bugs them about other student's behavior, such as pushing, shoving, and name calling, on 3 x 5 index cards and put them in the jar.

2. After all cards have been put in the bug jar, take out a card and read the example of annoying behavior written on it. Discuss the annoying behavior and solicit ideas from the group for coping with it.

3. Help students to develop responses for dealing with annoying behavior, such as saying: "When you borrow my pencil without asking, I can't do my work. Please ask me next time." Stress that the best way to react to annoying situations sometimes is to ignore the behavior and walk away.

"Thanks for the card packet," said Phil. "These ideas are great. Would you do a staff development program on social decision-making skills for our district?"

"Yes, I would be glad to do a program. Contact me about possible dates and times," responded Mary.

"Thanks Mary, I appreciate your help," said Dr. Marley. "Now it's time to visit Sally Chavez and Joe Snipes in the gymnasium for a brief lesson on restraint techniques."

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Knowing What Pushes Your Buttons

Sally Chavez, a physical education teacher, greeted Dr. Marley, Phil, and Janice when they arrived at the gymnasium and swimming pool complex. After introductions, Chavez said, "We are very fortunate to have some of the finest middle school facilities in the state. As Dr. Marley probably already told you, we started out as a college laboratory school designed for excellence. But of course, you did not come here just to tour our campus."

"It's a beautiful campus," responded Janice, "but we came here to learn about your methods for coping with aggressive students."

"Subduing or restraining violent or out-of-control students is a responsibility that is becoming more commonplace in today's school environment," replied Sally Chavez. "While it's rarely stated in job descriptions, one of the duties of school employees who supervise cafeterias or monitor halls is to diffuse verbal and physical confrontations among students. Effectively removing an aggressive student from the scene of the disruption to an empty classroom, counseling center, or administrative office is critical to maintaining a safe and orderly environment."

Dr. Marley picked up the theme: "We believe that it is crucial for every school staff member — administrators, teachers, and support personnel — to conduct a thorough self-examination to better understand those actions and words that make him or her angry.

"To put it another way, today's school employee must come to terms with those actions and words that *push his or her buttons*. For some,

these acts may come in the form of physical cues, such as having someone 'get in your face.' For others, these acts may be racial slurs or derogatory references to one's family members. School staff should not react personally in the heat of a disturbance requiring restraint. It is critical that the staff member retain his professional control throughout any confrontation. In restraining a student who has lost control of his emotions, the staff member must not react to the student's insults, or else he risks escalating an already volatile situation."

Dr. Marley's portable telephone beeped. Switching it to the listening mode, she learned that a disturbance had occurred in the hall near the school office. Telling the school secretary that she was on her way, Dr. Marley said to Phil and Janice, "Follow me and you may get to see a lesson in verbal judo. We'll be back soon, Sally."

Verbal Judo

Arriving at the scene, the trio found that Joe Snipes, a social studies teacher, had gotten there first and had taken Jonnie, an eighth-grade student who recently had transferred to the school because of behavior problems, into the administrator office area. They watched as Snipes looked Jonnie in the eyes and asked, "Why did you slam your books down and storm out of class? You interfered with the lesson and disturbed others in the class."

The exchange proceeded as follows:

Student: I didn't do anything! What the hell is your problem?

Teacher: Now wait a minute, you know students can't slam down their books and bolt out the door.

Student: You're always picking on me. This is bull! I can't believe it! I don't like what you're doing. You're embarrassing me in front of my friends.

(Student walks away from the teacher.)

Teacher: Jonnie, please come back here.

Student: No! No! I'm not going to!

Teacher: Would you rather talk about this with the principal?

Student: No! I'm not going to talk about it. You may be the teacher, but you can't run my life!

Teacher: I don't want to run your life Jonnie. I just want to help you. You're upset.

Student: Yeah, I suppose. Tell that to my mother. She's gone all the time. I take care of myself. Nobody tells me what to do. Now you're telling me I have to follow school rules. This place sucks! It's worse than my last school when I lived with my dad. I hate it here!

Teacher: Jonnie, will you listen to me?

Student: Go ahead! Say what you're going to say.

Teacher: Thank you, I will. I'm not going to raise my voice and argue with you. We don't want to embarrass ourselves to those kids waiting in the hall wondering what's going on in here, do we? I mean, these are your friends. Let's you and I talk for a few minutes, okay? It's your call. Do you want to talk now or after school?

Student: I guess I'll talk now.

Teacher: Okay, Jonnie. I know you've got problems. I see you coming in here every day to class. You're upset. . . .

Student: I'm trying! I'm trying! But everything seems to go wrong. Nobody cares about my problems.

Teacher: I care about your problems, but there are other students in the class. You aren't the only student. I have to have some order in the classroom. If you disrupt the class again, we'll have to take care of it with Dr. Marley; and that will probably mean detention or suspension.

Student: Okay, are you going to stay out of my face if I come back to class and sit down?

Teacher: Jonnie, I never want to get in your face. If you think I do it's because you made me address your behavior. I don't want to, but I can't ignore it. You have the option. It's your call, your decision. You don't have to create a problem.

Student: Okay, I'll come back to class and sit down. Just leave me alone, okay?

Teacher: Jonnie, would you do me a favor? During the lunch break, would you come to my classroom for a few minutes? I'd like to talk with you.

Student: OK, I guess.

Teacher: I would appreciate it if you would tell me more about yourself, and I would like to like to tell you more about myself. Maybe we could understand each other better.

As the student and teacher returned to class, Dr. Marley asked Phil and Janice for their interpretation of the scene just observed.

"I think we just observed verbal judo," said Phil. "Verbal judo was used to calm the student and establish a foundation for future conference and follow-up. I noticed how the teacher, despite the student's behavior, affirmed his interest in the student and his commitment in helping the student succeed. The teacher empathized with the student but stood firm regarding his expectations. Finally, the teacher provided an opportunity for further dialogue."

"I noticed five key points," said Janice. She summarized them:

1. Give the student the last word, while the teacher makes the last act.
2. Let the student save face. Do not verbally assault the student. Just control the situation.
3. Cut the herd, so to speak, by separating the out-of-control or disruptive student from others at the scene of the disturbance.
4. Do not give ultimatums that cannot be implemented.
5. Provide the student with alternatives to the situation. Give the student the opportunity to make a decision.

"In the incident that we observed, the teacher did an excellent job of defusing a potentially explosive situation," concluded Janice.

"You two are expert observers," said Dr. Marley. "It's obvious why your superintendent sent you on this assignment. Verbal judo is the use of verbal rather than physical force to subdue a student. The primary

goal of verbal judo is for the student to comply voluntarily with the instructions of the authority figure at the scene of the disturbance. It should be the initial action by a school staff member in restraining or subduing a student who is out-of-control but not engaged in assaultive behavior.

"Even though the adrenaline may be flowing, the staff member must always present a calm, controlled demeanor. It is important to 'talk the student down,' that is, to calm the student's emotional level. While the staff member's voice must be loud enough to be heard above the disturbance, it is important not to get in a shouting match with the student.

"It is sometimes beneficial to allow a cooling off period for the student following a disturbance, for the purpose of encouraging reflective thought that will be useful in helping the student develop positive goals to guide future behavior. However, a cooling off period should not last more than a day or two so that memories of the situation are still fresh in the student's mind.

"Finally, the staff member must make an effort to remain unbiased in recognizing gender and cultural differences. In some cultures, it may be difficult for male adolescents to accept the authority of a female."

Realizing she had slipped into a lecturing mode, Dr. Marley smiled and said it was time to return to the gymnasium. As they walked toward their designation, Phil and Janice knew they had experienced a lesson that they would not soon forget.

Using Physical Restraint Techniques

Returning to the gymnasium, Dr. Marley told Sally Chavez about the incident with the student named Jonnie and how Joe Snipes had handled it. Sally replied that Joe is especially good at using verbal judo to talk down an aggressive student.

Sally remarked that this was a good time for Phil and Janice to learn how to use physical restraint techniques to curb aggressive behavior, because Steve Chen, a teacher who had mastered restraint techniques, would soon have his planning and conference period and would demonstrate the techniques.

"In using physical force in the form of pain compliance holds to restrain violent or out-of-control students, it is important to understand the limits of its use," said Sally. "The use of physical force is justifiable in self-defense, defending a third party, or protecting property from serious damage. It also is justifiable when it is necessary to maintain order on school grounds, in the classroom, or at school activities, even if they occur after the end of the normal school day. Physical force also may be used to prevent attempts at suicide or self-injury. The operative rule in determining how much force to use is this: *Use only enough force to handle a given situation.* The amount of force used should never exceed that which is necessary to handle a given threat.

"In subduing a violent student, the staff member must rely on common sense in using physical restraint techniques. For example, using a physical restraint technique would not be appropriate if the threat

consists of a student standing toe-to-toe with the teacher and cursing without showing any indication of making a physical assault. Verbal judo would be more appropriate than physical force. The restraint technique must match the situation. And the staff member must never be in the position of the aggressor.

"Pain compliance is an effective approach for restraining an assaultive student and can be used by both male and female staff members. The objective of pain compliance is to strategically place a student in enough pain so that compliance is attained. However, pain compliance should be used only when the student is assaultive and out of control. This approach should not be used if the student is willing to comply with the teacher's request to stop the assault.

"Once the incident is over, the teacher involved in using a pain compliance hold on an assaultive student should document the incident in writing. Documentation should include a description of the precipitating disruption, the technique used, why the hold was necessary, and the final disposition of the incident."

When Steve Chen arrived at the gymnasium, Sally and Steve went to work teaching Phil and Janice three basic pain compliance techniques for restraining aggressive students. The first compliance hold they taught Phil and Janice was one in which the teacher puts thumb pressure on the hand of the assaultive student. Throughout the lesson, Sally carefully explained each compliance hold, while Steve demonstrated.

Sally put her left hand flat against Steve's chest, as if to shove him. Steve grasped Sally's hand with his right hand, centering his thumb on the back of her hand and grasping it firmly.

"Enough pressure must be applied at this point (by means of the teacher's thumb) to elicit pain on the back of the student's hand," explained Sally. "Without eliciting pain, the restraint technique is ineffective. Next, the student's hand is rotated in a clockwise direction, up and to the right. Sufficient pressure must be kept on the back of the student's hand while it is being rotated. Once the hand is rotated, the teacher brings in the left hand to apply added pressure and help steady

the student's hand. Pressure is continued as the student's arm is forced clockwise and down to the floor, if necessary. (See illustrations A, B, and C.)

"If the assaultive student attempts to strike or kick in retaliation, the teacher should move behind him while keeping sufficient pressure on the hand and arm. In most cases, the student will be more concerned with relieving his pain than assaulting the teacher applying the hold. Once the student is restrained, the teacher should inform him of what he needs to do to be released. For example, 'If you quit resisting me, Hank, we can go to the principal's office and talk about this matter.' Before relinquishing control, the teacher should consider the assaultive situation and his knowledge of the student being restrained."

"The second pain compliance hold," continued Sally, "is a physical restraint technique in which the teacher not only restrains the assaultive student but also influences him to move in a predetermined direction. Using a similar pain compliance hold as depicted in the previous example, the teacher reaches around the assaultive student's hand and

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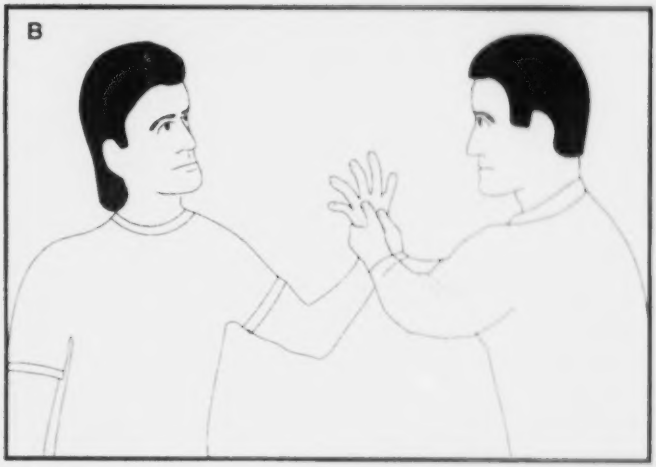

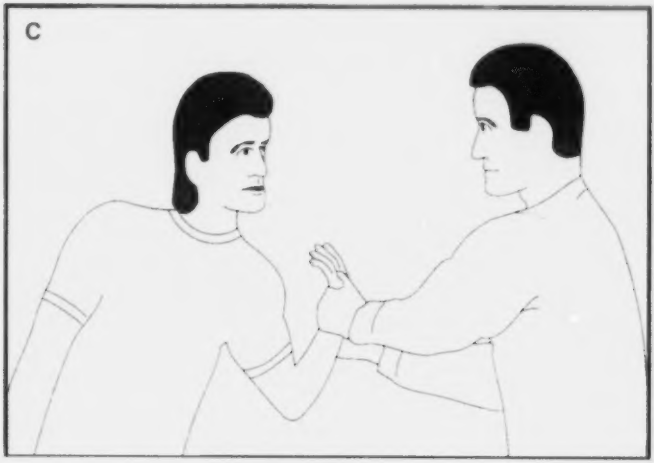

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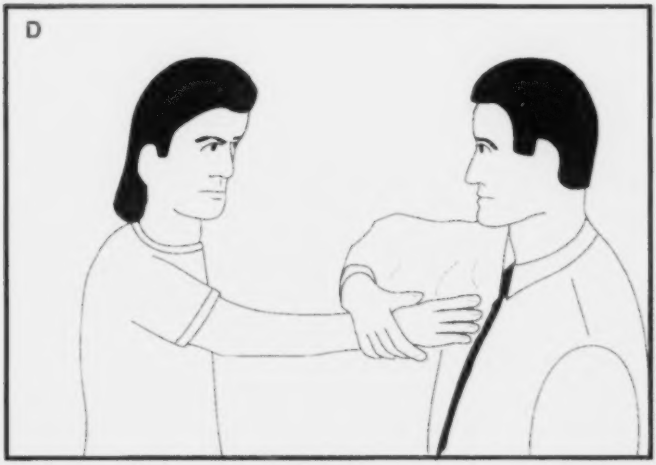
applies firm pressure on the back of the hand. The teacher then rotates the student's arm clockwise and applies pressure with both hands, while bending the student's wrist back. Maintaining pressure, the teacher walks the assaultive student in the desired direction. If the student tries to kick or punch, the teacher merely moves to remain directly behind the arm on which pressure is being applied. (See illustrations D, E, and F.)

The third restraint technique that Phil and Janice learned was the "come-along" hold. Continuing her explanation, Sally said, "The come-along hold — essentially a half-nelson — is another hold that can be used to restrain an assaultive student and take him to a designated area, such as an empty classroom or the principal's office. The teacher, using the same basic technique as shown in the previous example, uses back-of-the-hand pain compliance to restrain the assaultive student. Then, while rotating the student's arm in a clockwise motion, the teacher, with either hand, firmly grasps the student's thumb back toward the student's elbow. The student's hand is then rotated, clock-



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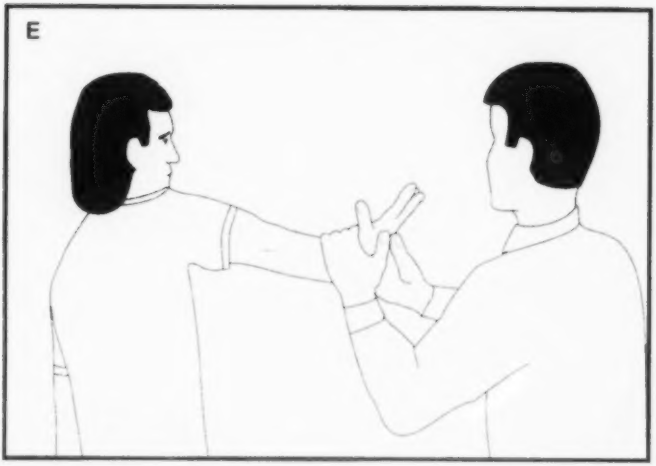

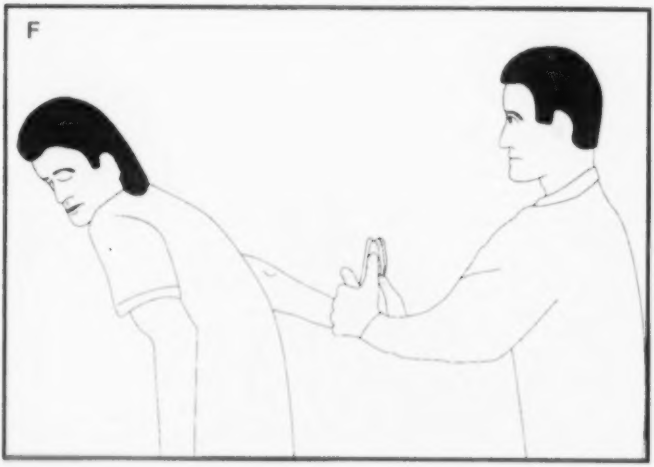

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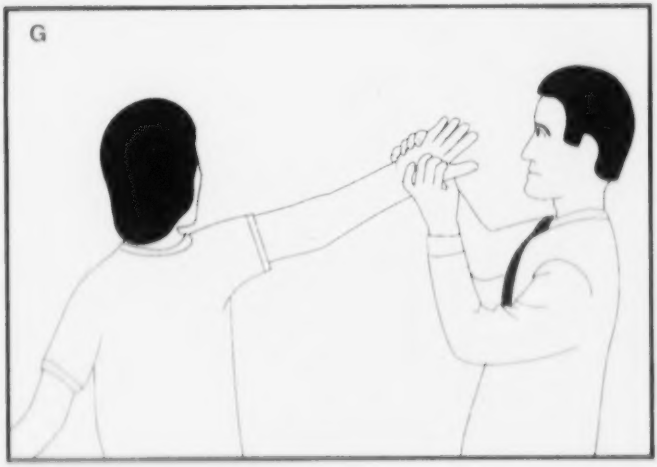
wise, to a six o'clock position. The teacher moves beside the student and continues to apply thumb pressure while rotating the arm to a nine o'clock position. At the same time, the teacher grasps the student's elbow with his free hand. With pressure continually applied on the thumb and using body and shoulder, the teacher moves the student in the desired direction. (See illustrations G, H, and I.)

"Once the teacher has a firm hold on the student in the half-nelson position, she needs to tell the student three things," said Sally. She summarized:

1. *Why pain compliance was used.* For example, the teacher might say, "We will not tolerate physical assaults in our school. If you cannot control your own behavior, I will have to do it for you. It's your choice."
2. *What the student should do.* For example, the teacher might say, "Walk with me to the principal's office."



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3. *What the student must do to have the pain compliance terminated.* For example, the teacher might say, "If you come with me willingly, I'll let you go."

Phil and Janice practiced the pain compliance holds diligently under the tutoring of Sally and Steve. Before long, both were able to demonstrate reasonable proficiency in using the techniques.

After the session concluded, Dr. Marley said, "Good work. You two are fast learners. However, an important caution is in order. Physical restraint techniques must be used only by staff who have received training and who have had sufficient practice to develop proficiency. A staff member using pain compliance to control a student must have had enough practice to internalize various actions and reactions.

"Training can be arranged through a local law enforcement agency, with time set aside for review and practice. In instances where restraint techniques need to be used, a staff member must be able to make an immediate assessment of the situation and act in a purposeful and reasonable manner. Also, remember that these techniques are appropriate only for upper-elementary and secondary-level students. Pain compliance should not be used with preschool and primary-grade children. A supportive bear hug is effective in restraining a young child who has lost control."

Phil and Janice thanked Sally and Steve for the lesson in the use of physical restraint techniques. As they walked with Dr. Marley back to the school office, the two teachers assured her that they would work closely with their local law enforcement agency in planning staff development workshops on the use of physical restraints by the staff in their school district.

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Reflecting on the Day

After thanking and saying good-bye to Dr. Marley, Phil and Janice started home. For the first part of the drive the two teachers were silent as they reflected on the day's events.

Janice was reading through her notes when she heard Phil say, "A penny for your thoughts, Janice."

Janice laughed and then said, "I was just thinking about how much we learned about coping with aggressive student behavior. Best of all, it was so practical. The way I see it, there are 10 key points to keep in mind concerning aggressive students." Pulling her notes together, she summarized the points as follows:

1. Keeping student behavior in bounds calls for the teacher to employ preventative procedures and be consistent in classroom discipline practices.
2. Using a contingency contract helps an aggressive student identify the specific behaviors that need to be improved.
3. Helping the student to realize *how* she communicates with others is as important as *what* she communicates.
4. Get the student to think about the differences among aggressive, passive, and assertive behavior by involving him in open-ended problem-solving activities.
5. Build the student's social decision-making skills by teaching him a method for solving problems that involves critical thinking,

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such as Mary Stark's five-step approach, which calls for the student to:

a) identify the problem,
b) list solutions,
c) consider alternatives,
d) make a decision, and
e) evaluate results.

6. Take a preventative approach to behavior problems by teaching social decision-making skills to groups of students by using such ideas as "The Bug Jar."
7. Know what pushes your buttons when restraining out-of-control students — that is, what actions or words makes you angry — in order to deal with an incident from a professional perspective.
8. Use verbal judo — verbal rather than physical force — to get an aggressive student to voluntarily comply with the teacher's request. Five key points to remember in using verbal judo are:
   a) give the student the last word,
   b) let the student save face,
   c) separate the out-of-control student from the group,
   d) do not make ultimatums that cannot be implemented, and
   e) provide the student with alternatives.
9. Use physical force, such as pain compliance, only when the student is physically assaultive and the situation makes it absolutely necessary; for example, to protect your own safety or the safety of another.
10. Develop proficiency in how to apply pain compliance holds before ever using them to restrain an assaultive student.

"Wow! You certainly take great notes and have a concise way of remembering what you learned," responded Phil in admiration.

Resources

The following resource list provides a brief bibliography for those interested in delving further into the topic of restraining aggressive students.

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The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation was established on 13 October 1966 with the signing, by Dr. George H. Reavis, of the irrevocable trust agreement creating the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation Trust.

George H. Reavis (1883-1970) entered the education profession after graduating from Warrensburg Missouri State Teachers College in 1906 and the University of Missouri in 1911. He went on to earn an M.A. and a Ph.D. at Columbia University. Dr. Reavis served as assistant superintendent of schools in Maryland and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1929 he was appointed director of instruction for the Ohio State Department of Education. But it was as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Cincinnati public schools (1939-48) that he rose to national prominence.

Dr. Reavis' dream for the Educational Foundation was to make it possible for seasoned educators to write and publish the wisdom they had acquired over a lifetime of professional activity. He wanted educators and the general public to "better understand (1) the nature of the educative process and (2) the relation of education to human welfare."

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